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Qualitative Webinar Series: Coding and Themes in Your Data

August 15, 2017

with Jo Ann Shoup

Kaiser Permanente Colorado Institute for Health Research

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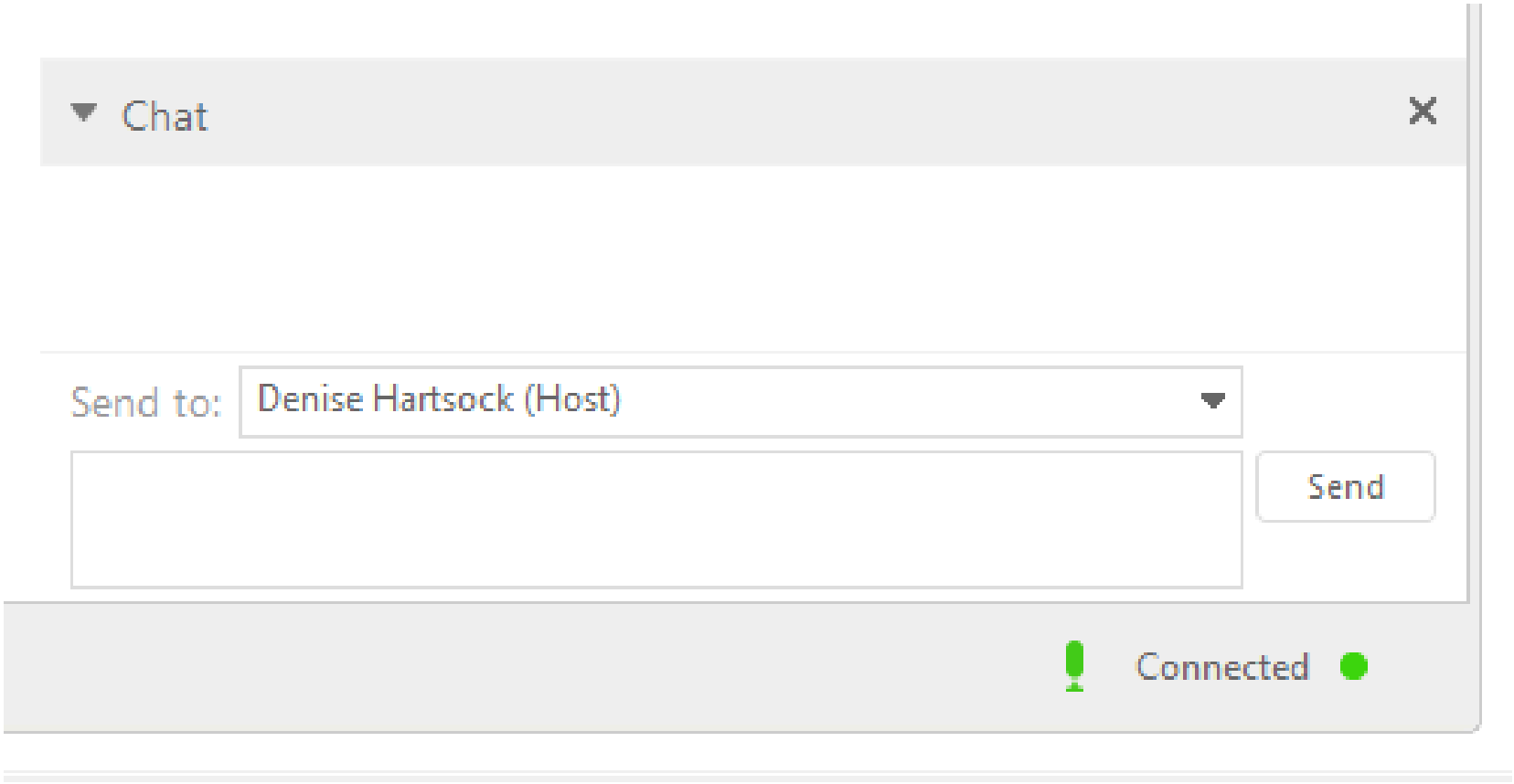

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Objectives

Using a pragmatic approach with qualitative data, apply strategies and techniques for:

1. Organizing your data
2. Figuring out what coding approach to use
3. Developing a codebook
4. Applying codes to your data
5. Analyzing your codes
6. Recognizing emerging themes across your dataset

Organizing your data

- You've collected your data through interviews, focus groups, or other ways
  - Now what?
    - Figure out what kind of data you have
    - Figure out what kind of questions you want to answer
    - Figure out what resources you have available
      - Money
      - People
      - Timeline

Steps to organizing your data

- Step 1: Determine what kind of data you have
  - Stories (narrative)
  - Structured interview script
  - Focus group discussion
  - Notes or fully transcribed data (word for word)
  - Observations
- Step 2: Determine how your data is displayed
  - Longitudinal
  - Prospective or retrospective
  - Point in time
  - Cases/individuals or group

Steps to organizing your data

- Step 3: Determine how you want to view your data
  - Excel
  - Word document
- Step 4: Determine if one person or multiple people will be coding the data

Coding

- Why code?
  - Define processes in the data
  - Make comparisons between data
  - Help tell the story
- What is a code?
  - The process of organizing and sorting your data.
  - Codes serve as a way to:
    - Label data
    - Compile data
    - Organize data
    - Summarize data
    - Synthesize what is happening in your data

Types of coding

- Inductive
  - “Open” coding
  - Exploratory
  - Interpretative
  - Labor intensive
- Focused
  - Use the “best” initial codes
  - More theoretical reach, direction, and centrality

Types of coding

- Deductive
  - Pre-planned codebook
  - Confirmatory
  - Descriptive

Common coding practices

- Can use a mixture of inductive and deductive coding
- Checking, revisiting, and refining coding
  - Go back over the text multiple times
  - Use experts in the field to consult on your impressions
  - Go back to the source experts, your participants, early in the process to confirm your findings
- Reflect on your patterns of coding
  - Use memos to note any potential bias in your coding
  - Capture notes on any limitations to the data
- Pruning codes

Pragmatic qualitative coding

- Fundamental coding
- Only doing what makes sense for the study
- Not tied to a particular tradition
- Solve the problem and get the job done
  - Describe the change and contribute to knowledge base

Developing a codebook

- Use excel or word doc
- Write down each code and detail the definition
- Make revisions
  - Combine codes
  - Clarify definitions
- Test out the codebook

Example of a codebook (deductive)

Model constructs	Definition	Application/example
Benefits of vaccinating (1)	This measures the parents' perception of effectiveness of vaccines	"I think vaccines keep my baby safe in the world"; "My baby is better off by getting vaccines….why take the risk of disease?"
Barriers to vaccinating (2)	This measures the parents' perception of physical and psychological costs of vaccination	"I can't put my baby at risk of a learning disability in the future…I mean, they do not know enough about safety of these vaccines"; "To hear my baby cry so hard after vaccines is terrible. I can't take it"

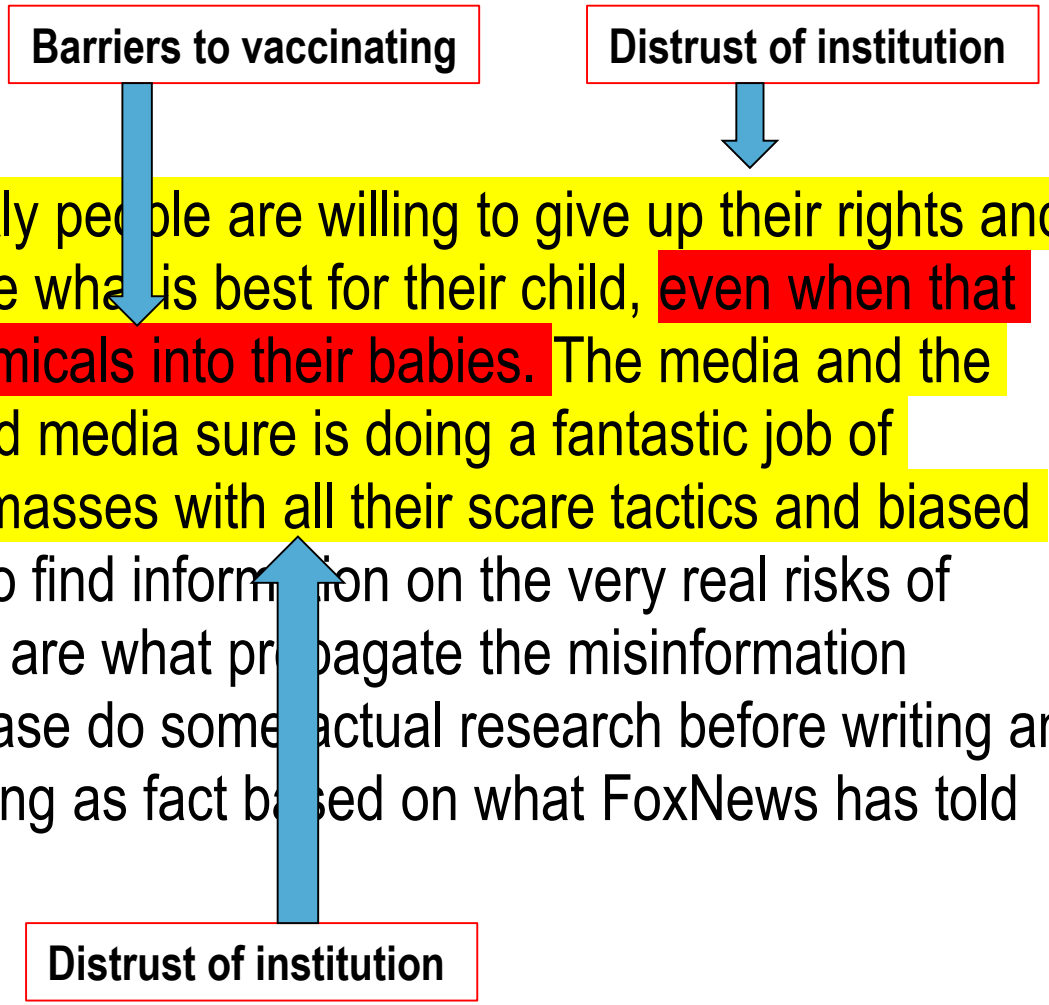
Example of a codebook (inductive)

Code	Definition	Application/example
Distrust of individual provider (1)	Parent has concern/question about the provider related to vaccines	"My child's pediatrician seems to be forcing me to vaccinate my child""; "I really do not think my child's nurse knows much about the ingredients in vaccines"
Distrust of institution (govt, pharma, insurance company) (2)	Parent has concern/question about institutions such as government, pharma, or insurance company related to vaccines	"We know that the study was sponsored by big pharma--that is why they say vaccines are safe--it lines their pockets"

Lets code!

It’s pretty scary how quickly people are willing to give up their rights and let the government choose what is best for their child, even when that means injecting risky chemicals into their babies. The media and the corporations who own said media sure is doing a fantastic job of coercing the uninformed masses with all their scare tactics and biased reporting. It’s quite easy to find information on the very real risks of vaccines. Articles like this are what propagate the misinformation rampant in this issue. Please do some actual research before writing an opinion piece masquerading as fact based on what FoxNews has told you.

Lets code!



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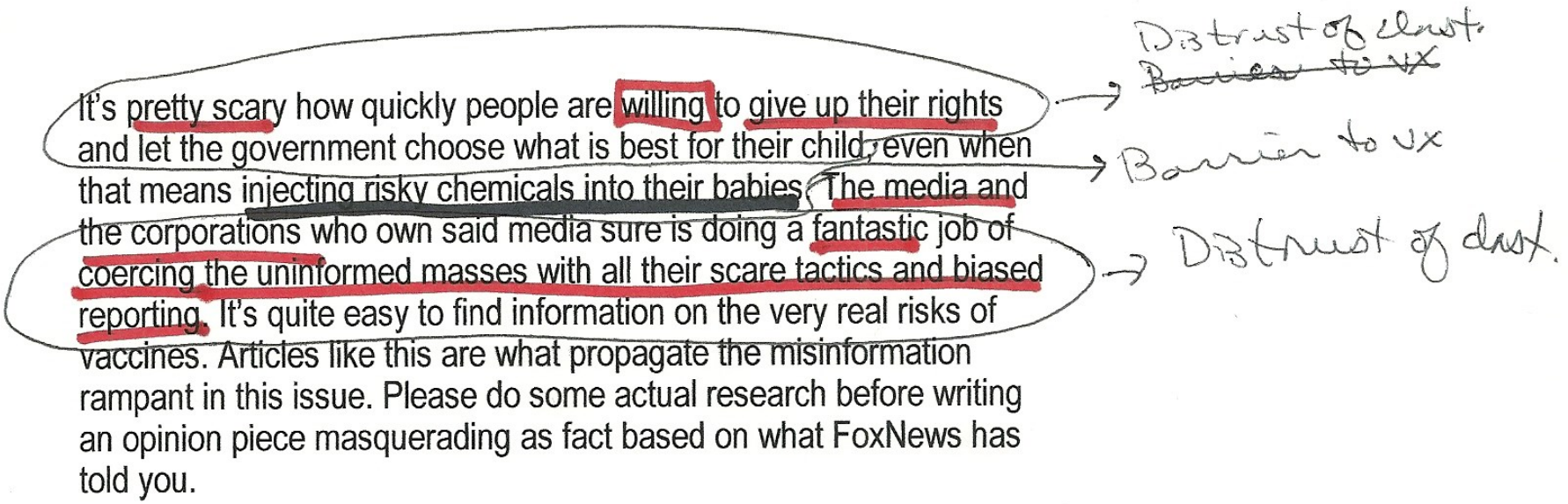
How to organize your data for group coding

Text #	Text to Code	Code 1	Code 2	Code 3
3	It's pretty scary how quickly people are willing to give up their rights and let the government choose what is best for their child, even when that means injecting risky chemicals into their babies.	1	2	

How to organize your data for individual coding



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Using memos

- Write your ideas about the data
  - Notes about the language used in the data
    - Pauses
    - Metaphors (type of language used)
    - Context (e.g. after my child was vaccinated)
  - Reactions to the data
    - Emotion to the participant data based on your experiences
      - "I thought about my cousin, who had the measles at age 10. He was very sick—and a vaccine could have avoided his severe illness"
    - Provides an audit trail of your understanding about the data over time

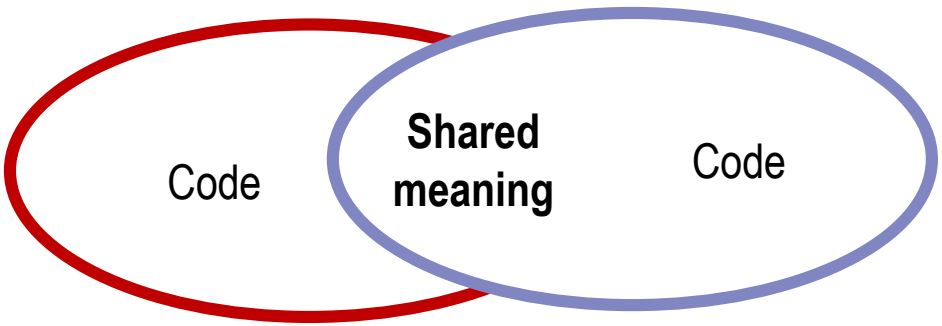
Analyzing your codes

You've coded your data, now what?

- Let your research questions guide your analytic approach!
  - Also consider time, resources, cost
- Different approaches to analyzing your data
  - Descriptive
    - Counting the frequencies of codes to identify concepts
  - Differences
    - Differences between groups
      - Are there differences between moms and dads about childhood vaccines?
      - Are first time moms more anxious about vaccines than moms who already have had children?

Analyzing your codes

- Linking codes together to identify concepts
  - Do any codes share meaning together?
  - Does the text segments tell a specific kind of story?
  - Do the codes together have meaning beyond their individual meaning
  - Remember, these linked codes might not be in the same segment or page of text



Example of frequencies of codes

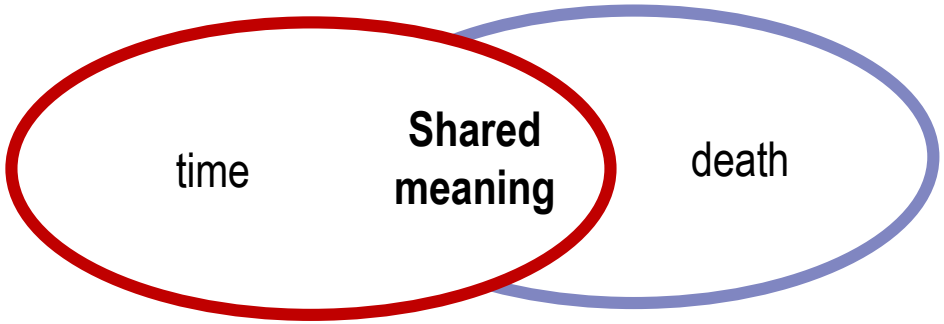
- Step 1: Report on each code
  - Count the number of times a code is coded in your data
    - Use an excel coding template to sort your codes
    - Use manual counting in word documents
- Step 2: Summarize each code
  - Frequency table

Codes	Public website N(%)	Study social media website N(%)	p value
Health Belief Model			.080
Benefits of vaccinating	9(11.4)	5(8.2)	
Barriers to vaccinating	18(22.8)	19(31.1)	

Example of codes with shared meaning

Interviews with people experiencing terminal cancer

- Time
- Death and dying
- Shared meaning between these two codes:
  - Wishing for more time and fearing death
  - Making a trade



Text example of codes with shared meaning: “Wishing for more time and fearing death”; “Making a trade”

- Bill: “The docs tell me I only have 4 months…a ballpark estimate. It could be longer…..or shorter. That’s not enough time. I don’t know what to prioritize, what to chose to do, or nothing at all” **Code: Time; Code: Death and dying**

- Bill: “I can’t believe I’ll miss my daughter’s first day of school, I want a chance, give me a chance. A chance to see my daughter go to kindergarten. I’ll give anything for that time…my house, all my money” **Code: Time**

- Bill: “I don’t want to die yet, I’m scared to let go” **Code: Death and dying**

Themes

- A theme is found across data
- Conceptually ‘higher” than a code
- Run through your data
- Examples
  - Perceptions of risk
  - Feelings of control

Finding themes

- Work horizontally – across your data
  - Across interviews
  - Across time
  - Memoing helps (reflect on the data)
  - Stepping back from the data
  - Then going back in again and again to the data
  - Checking in with others about themes

Examples of themes

Perceptions of risk

- “Indeed!! Not risking my babies with vaccines that are unsafe and where evidence suggests the actual vaccination programmes cause the problems, or else are ineffective! Type vaccine injury into Google...or talk to my friends whose kids weren't autistic until they got shots”
- “I couldn't knowingly inject poison into my child's veins”
- “My cousins baby died after receiving 6 vaccines at 6 month old. She was so upset with her doctor, he didn't let her know that was one of the risk”

Examples of themes

We’re just spreading them out (feelings of control)

- “I don't mind my new child getting some vaccines, but not all and certainly not on the schedule they require. We also have a co-sleeper, which I hope he will sleep in, but none of my other children did, so I am not hopeful for this one. In fact, we didn't even buy a bed”
- “We do vaccinate, but on a very delayed schedule. I like to wait and watch for any adverse reaction after each shot so as not to resort to guessing games over what the source of my child’s illness might be”

Summing things up—tips

- Organize your data
- Decide on coding approaches based on
  - Research question
  - Time, money, and people available
- Take time to code
  - Re-visit your coding
  - Use memos
- Look for linkages between codes for bigger conceptual meaning
- Themes come from looking across your data

Questions?

- Questions after the Webinar?
  - Jo.Ann.Shoup@kp.org